

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, June 13, 1898, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B. Monday, June 13th, 1898. At B. B. Hall. Dear Mabel:

Here is warning No. 1.

From the Transcript for June 10th, 1898.

(Newspaper clipping: "Yellow Fever at McHenry.")

Two letters received from you, one dated June 8th, the other undated — explaining reasons for wanting Daisy to visit Cuba or Key West with the Red Cross. I find I was quite mistaken in supposing, that Daisy had been stricken by a desire to nurse the sick and wounded, indeed there is nothing to show that she has expressed any personal desire to go at all. I can well understand Miss Barton's desire to have her. We are reported to be wealthy and influential — and although we were among the first to respond to the President's call for help for the Reconcentrados — we have not contributed to the Red Cross Funds. Through Daisy's interest in the work we might be induced to help and etc. This is all right — and I don't complain. The Red Cross, under Miss Barton, is doing a noble work and deserves help and encouragement from everybody. I don't at all object to contribute funds but I do object to risk my daughter in a yellow fever region at this season. This is not my sole reason but it is enough and if such a proposition should be made in the winter time — in the healthy season — I should have no objection. But now not only is the unhealthy season beginning — but, quite apart from this, the heat alone, in the summer time, is a serious matter. It is hot in Washington — but it is hotter down in Florida and Cuba — and will grow hotter still. And the heat there is associated with plenty of moisture in the air. A dry heat, in an arid region, may be uncomfortable, but it is not

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especially dangerous, because perspiration by evaporation cools the skin. But great heat accompanied by humidity is deadly — because evaporation, being checked, perspiration no longer produces a cooling effect — the blood temperature rises — and — a

I trust that Mrs. Kennan will be wise enough to refrain from accompanying the Red Cross at this season. Mr. Kennan is thin and wiry — one of those men who seem sometimes so haggard and careworn as to be ready to drop into the grave — but who are yet so tough as to pull through hardships that would break stronger looking men. Mrs. Kennan is not of that build — and her present condition of health is not such as to render it wise for her to tempt fate by venturing into dangerous regions without adequate cause.

Daisy, I believe, is tougher than she looks, and if she passes safely through her teens, may, if she takes care of her health, live to be an old woman, but, at present she is delicate and needs to be watched carefully — nursed — not exposed. Give up your wild idea — and don't think of exposing her to danger — even though she should never have such a chance again to see the “back-yard of war.”

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I have not urged you to contribute to the funds of the Red Cross because at present there is no need and I know that the state of our finances will be more favorable to such an act a little later on. The people at large are responding generously so that contributions from us are of comparatively slight importance now. If we give at all let us give generously. There will be need later on. This war will not be closed without blood and suffering — and all the Reconcentrados are not dead. When our funds come in, in July, let us give aid to the Red Cross.

Please send me, at once, a copy of your father's letter of 1868 — referring to Gallaudet and his omission to invite Representation from the Clarke Institution at the First Conference of Superintendents and Principals.

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In all the material already collected relating to your father's work for the deaf — there is not one letter or memorandum of his . I am very anxious to find something in his own handwriting or in his own words written in the year 1864 (March) about the time he brought in his bill in the Massachusetts Legislature. No one can antedate that Bill — but we have very little reliable information regarding it — excepting personal recollections written more than 30 years afterwards. We have not even found the Petition which accompanied the Bill, which your father states was his own act without aid or suggestion 4 from any one. Your father must have written letters to somebody about it. The Governor, Senators and Representatives, influential men and etc., — and if he was away from home he must have written to your mother about it.

It is very important, from a historical point of view, that we should collect all the information possible concerning the Bill of March 1864.

Later section was anticipated by Mr. Engelemann in New York and the society formed by him (unknown to your father). Miss Rogers' School was not the first oral school established on American soil. Engelemann in New York formed an oral school in New York for Jewish pupils before Miss Rogers began work. His school became the New York Institution for the improved instruction of deaf-mutes (Mr. Green's school) and Miss Rogers' School became the Clarke Institution. The New York Institution was organized and in operation before the Clarke Institution, but the Clarke Institution was the first to obtain a charter from the State.

The two schools did not know of each other's existence for a long time.

The dates of commencement and organization are very close, but I have not the slightest doubt, that if statements were challenged — the New York Institution for 5 Improved Instruction can show earlier dates than the Clarke Institution. Hence we have got to be very careful in our claims for your father's work. Any statement that he was the first to establish the Oral Method in America based simply upon the establishment of Miss

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Rogers' School in Chelmsford — cannot be sustained. We need earlier dates — and we have them.

I think we are entitled to claim that Miss Rogers' Chelmsford School and the Clarke Institution were only continuations of your father's work of 1864 — and if we can run back the origin of the Introduction of the Oral Method in Massachusetts to your father's Bill of March 1864 we stand on firm ground that cannot be assailed — for Engelemann did not land in America until a later date (May 1864 I think). I think we are entitled to do this — and rest upon it the claim that he was the first to establish the Oral Method here.

The trouble here is, however, that there is not one word in the Bill of March 1864, so far as I remember, concerning the Oral Method. The Bill does not show upon its face that it asked for an "Oral" School — or even an "Articulating" School. If I remember rightly it was simply for "A Massachusetts School for deaf-mutes." There may have been something about the method of instruction in the Petition accompanying the Bill — but this has not been found. There must have been something said about it — in the discussion at the hearing before the Committee — but we have not succeeded in finding a copy of the hearing. We have found a number of newspaper notices but not one word about articulation or Oral Method.

Of course we know that your father's object was the establishment of an Oral School — but there is nothing in the Bill, or from him, to show it. I mean, nothing of contemporary date — and it is very important that we should secure something. This really is the reason why I have not yet attempted to compile the material collected. I wanted Mrs. Pratt to become thoroughly familiar with the subject, examine newspapers and documents and etc., as a preparation for interviewing your mother — and it has been a great disappointment to me that she could not go to Washington.

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With your mother's aid — she would find something if anybody could — showing by documentary evidence of contemporary age — (1864) that your father's Bill was intended to establish a school on the Oral or Articulation Method.

She has already found one document bearing upon the subject — the report of the committee advising the Legislature not to pass the Bill — in which reference is made to the conflicting methods of instruction in such a way as to indicate that the committee believed that if the Bill was passed your father would have the Oral Method used. I don't remember the language. It seemed to me sufficient to establish our claim — in the absence of any contemporary utterances of your father — but, as the Bill does not mention anything about Methods of Instruction, the statement of the committee might be taken simply as their interpretation of the objects of the promoter in offering the Bill. They charged him with intending to use a method which the Hartford people declared had been tried before and had failed.

What we want is your father's own statement that this was his object — not a statement made 30 years after the event — but words of his to that effect — made at the time (1864). Then the proof is complete. Tell your mother of the importance of this point.

Meeting in Gertrude Hall today to hear General Montgomery Moore speak of the work of the Victorian Order of Nurses. Unfortunately I could not go — but I wrote a note to General Moore which was read at the meeting — and helped to put matters upon a practical basis. Mr. McCurdy I think has sent you a copy of my note and General Moore's reply. I didn't feel specially called upon to say why I didn't go. I wonder what people would have said had they known that my absence was caused by my wife's having sent me a — a — “crushed fly!” That fly was a whopper! In spite of lack of exercise I lost 2½ pounds in 24 hours — 8 and all because of a — fly!

You can send me some more of them if you like — I think they are good things. If they bring my weight down at that rate I shall soon be in trim to stand Washington or Cuba?

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So Mr. Lindsay (Lindelsy?) is not off for the war.

Now my dear little girl, I can't go on writing either letters or journals like this. It takes my night time — even though written at a scribble.

Love to your dear mamma. I think I'll change round — and drop you for a day or two — and write to your mamma. How is Gipsy?

Your loving husband, Alec. Mrs. A. G. Bell, Washington, D. C.